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THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

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The entire civilized world, as well as China, is to be heartily congratulated upon the glorious revolution which has been sweeping over that vast ancient empire during the last three months, and which is now practically assured of success. "Just as conflagrations light up the whole city," says Victor Hugo, "revolutions light up the whole human race." Of no revolution recorded in the world's history can this be said with a greater degree of truth than of the present revolution in China. It spells the overthrow of monarchy, which has existed there for over forty centuries, and the downfall of a dynasty which has been the enemy of human progress for the last two hundred and seventy years. It effects the recognition and establishment of personal liberty, the sovereignty of man over himself, for four hundred and thirty-two million souls, one-third of the world's total population.

The Chinese revolution marks, in short, a great, decisive step in the onward march of human progress. It benefits not only China, but the whole world, for just as a given society should measure its prosperity not by the welfare of a group of individuals, but by the welfare of the entire community, so must humanity estimate its progress according to the well-being of the whole human race. Society cannot be considered to be in a far advanced stage of civilization if one-third of the globe's inhabitants are suffering under the oppression and tyranny of a one-man rule. Democracy cannot be said to exist if a great portion of the people on the earth have not even political freedom. Real democracy exists only when all men are free and equal. Hence, any movement which brings about the recognition and establishment of personal liberty for one-third of the members of the human family, as the Chinese revolution is doing, may well be pronounced to be beneficial to mankind.

But¹ is it really true and credible that conservative, slumbering

¹ Strange as it may seem, this doubt is entertained even by many intelligent and well-informed persons. A noted Japanese educator, author and statesman, in a formal address before the Contemporary Club in Philadelphia last December, refused to dignify the present movement in China with the term "revolution," and called it "merely a disturbance."

and "mysterious" China is actually having a revolution, that beautiful and terrible thing, that angel in the garb of a monster? If it is, what is the cause of the revolution? What will be its ultimate outcome? What will follow its success? Will a republic be established and will it work successfully? These and many other questions pertaining to the Chinese situation have been asked, not only by skeptics, but also by persons interested in China and human progress.

It is the purpose of this article merely to discuss, from the viewpoint of enlightened, educated Chinese, these various questions, some of which are too stupendous for the author to answer without posing as a prophet.

There can be no doubt that China is in earnest about what she is doing. Even the skeptics who called the revolution a "mob movement," or another "Boxer uprising," at its early stage must now admit the truth of the matter. The admirable order and discipline which have characterized its proceedings conclusively prove that the revolution is a well-organized movement, directed by men of ability, intelligence and humanitarian principles. Sacredness of life and its rights, for which they are fighting, have generally guided the conduct of the rebels. The mob element has been conspicuous by its absence from their ranks. It is very doubtful whether a revolution involving such an immense territory and so many millions of people as are involved in this one could be effected with less bloodshed than has thus far marked the Chinese revolution. If some allowance be made for exaggeration in the newspaper reports of the loss of lives and of the disorders that have occurred during the struggle, allowance which is always permissible and even wise for one to make, there has been very little unnecessary bloodshed committed by the revolutionists.

Although anti-Manchu spirit was a prominent factor in bringing about the uprising, it has been subordinated by the larger idea of humanity. With the exception of a few instances of unnecessary destruction of Manchu lives at the beginning of the outbreak, members of that tribe have been shown great clemency. The rebel leaders have impressed upon the minds of their followers that their first duty is to respect life and property, and have summarily punished those having any inclination to loot or kill. Despite the numerous outrages and acts of brutality by the Manchus and

imperial troops, the revolutionaries have been moderate, lenient and humane in their treatment of their prisoners and enemies. Unnecessary bloodshed has been avoided by them as much as possible. As Dr. Wu Ting-fang has said: "The most glorious page of China's history is being written with a bloodless pen."

Regarding the cause of the revolution, it must be noted that the revolt was not a sudden, sporadic movement, nor the result of any single event. It is the outcome of a long series of events, the culmination of the friction and contact with the Western world in the last half century, especially the last thirty years, and of the importation of Western ideas and methods into China by her foreign-educated students and other agents.

During the last decade, especially the last five years, there has been a most wonderful awakening among the people in the empire. One could almost see the growth of national consciousness, so rapidly has it developed. When the people fully realized their shortcomings and their country's deplorable weakness as it has been constantly brought out in her dealings with foreign powers, they fell into a state of dissatisfaction and profound unrest. Filled with the shame of national disgrace, and imbued with democratic ideas, they have been crying for a strong and liberal government, but their pleas and protests have been in most cases ignored and in a few cases responded to with half-hearted superficial reforms which are far from satisfactory to the progressives. The Manchu government has followed its traditional *laissez faire* policy in the face of foreign aggressions and threatening dangers of the empire's partition, with no thought of the morrow. Until now it has been completely blind to the force of the popular will and has deemed it not worth while to bother with the common people.

Long ago patriotic Chinese gave up hope in the Manchu government and realized that China's salvation lay in the taking over of the management of affairs into their own hands. For over a decade Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and other Chinese of courage and ability, mostly those with a Western education, have been busily engaged in secretly preaching revolutionary doctrines among their fellow-countrymen and preparing for a general outbreak. They collected numerous followers and a large sum of money. The revolutionary propaganda was being spread country-wide, among the gentry and soldiers, and even among enlightened government officials, in spite of govern-

mental persecution and strict vigilance. Revolutionary literature was being widely circulated, notwithstanding the rigid official censorship.

Added to all this are the ever important economic causes. Famines and floods in recent years have greatly intensified the already strong feeling of discontent and unrest, and served to pile up more fuel for the general conflagration.

In short, the whole nation was like a forest of dry leaves which needed but a single fire spark to make it blaze. Hence, when the revolution broke out on the memorable 10th of last October, at Wu-Chang, it spread like a forest fire. Within the short period of two weeks fourteen of the eighteen provinces of China proper joined in the movement one after another with amazing rapidity. Everywhere people welcomed the advent of the revolutionary army as the drought-stricken would rejoice at the coming rain, or the hungry at the sight of food. The great wave of democratic sentiment which had swept over Europe, America and the islands of Japan at last reached the Chinese shore, and is now rolling along resistlessly over the immense empire towards its final goal—a world-wide democracy.

All indications seem now to point to the success of the revolution. The Manchu dynasty has been reduced to a helpless and pitiful state, with neither supporters nor financial backing. It is doomed. Yuan Shi-Kai cannot prevent the inevitable. He either is blind to the trend of the time or overestimates his strength in trying to oppose the popular will. He cannot do it successfully, and no one can. The will of a people who are fully aroused is the supreme law of the land. They have the power and with it can have what they want. The Chinese people are now fully aroused, and "though they prefer peace almost on any terms to war," as a leading New York daily recently observed in its editorial column, "there are limits to their submissiveness, and when these limits are passed they can fight as well as anybody else. Certainly it is not courage they lack or the stern determination that does or dies." Yuan might just as well try to stop the mighty torrent of the Yangtze Kiang as to oppose the will of over four hundred million aroused Chinese. If he succeeds in checking it temporarily, he only makes it all the more violent and irresistible later. The revolution is sure to reach its goal, because it is the movement of the people

and the battle of the right and true, which are bound to win out in the end.

There is, however, just one thing which can prevent the revolution from attaining its ultimate success, namely, foreign intervention. But, fortunately, the ambitious Powers have not been furnished with any excuse to intervene and have observed strict neutrality thus far. It is to be earnestly hoped that they will maintain their present attitude so long as their citizens are protected in China. The Middle Kingdom ought to be given a chance to work out her own salvation, and she is fully capable of doing it. Let no civilized nation, on the pretext of protecting the life and property of a few of its citizens, kill a great cause for a small one and snatch away from millions of people their opportunity to gain liberty and personal rights in order to shield a handful of individuals.

Moreover, if commercial countries wish to see peace restored in the empire so that trade can be again carried on there, they should not for that reason bring pressure to bear upon the contending parties with the view of effecting an early settlement. In order that peace may be permanent, it must be established on a firm basis, on terms satisfactory to the people directly concerned. Should the Powers unite to compel the republicans to compromise with a constitutional monarchy, as it has been intimated, temporary peace might be brought about, but fresh trouble is certain to arise, resulting in a further stagnation of trade.

The prevailing sentiment in China is strongly in favor of the establishment of a republic, and nothing short of that, it seems, can satisfy the people. The question may be raised here with perfect pertinence, "Are the Chinese ready for a republic? Are they not like a child which, seeing other boys run, tries to do the same, while it is barely able to walk?" Upon this point there is a great divergence of opinion; some think the Chinese are absolutely incapable of governing themselves, while others claim they are fit for self-government, with a great majority of observers favoring a constitutional monarchy.

People in China want a republic not because they desire to be fashionable or up-to-date. They are not an imitative race, be it said to their discredit or credit. They are conservative and deliberate. They accept things they think are good for them and reject things they consider useless or harmful. How heartily they welcome

Western learning, railroads and steamships! How stubbornly they fought against the importation of opium into their country by England, much as they scorn the use of force!

The Chinese have reasons for wanting a republic and for not temporizing with a constitutional monarchy. To them the very thought of having a Manchu emperor as figurehead for the latter form of government appears ridiculous as well as obnoxious. They would consider it an act of insanity to retain him now that they no longer have to, after struggling for years to get rid of him. For nearly three centuries the Manchus have been an inexhaustible source of corruption and evil in the Chinese government. Young China wishes to have a thorough house-cleaning and to get at the root of the evil. Furthermore, a figurehead like that can be easily put there, but once there, is extremely hard to get rid of. If a logical candidate could be found among the descendants of Chinese royalty to head the limited monarchy, the people might agree upon a constitutional government. But, since there is none to be found, and the selection of a head from among the rebel leaders would breed quarrels and jealousies, it is deemed wise and expedient to avoid these difficulties by the establishment of a republic.

This most advanced form of government is not a brand new thing to the Chinese. Village government, which is self-government in miniature, has existed in Chinese communities for centuries, and has been a pronounced success in preserving peace and order among the inhabitants. It is a great feature of the Chinese civilization.

Nor is the idea of equality of man, which is the fundamental principle of democratic government, a new concept to a people among whom no class or caste system has ever existed. Among the Chinese there are no classes except such as those determined by vocations. According to the old and practically the only classification, scholars have the highest social status, with farmers next and laborers and merchants standing at the bottom of the social ladder. But, as every one is free to choose his own profession, the system is really based on a purely intellectual standard. What could be more democratic than this? Through sheer mental ability a person can become the prime minister of the empire. There is nothing to stop him. The age-long experience of the Chinese in village government and their intellectual democracy have indeed given them an excellent preparation for political democracy.

Besides, the Chinese as a race possess many good civic qualities, such as law-abidingness, industriousness and love for peace, which should greatly help to make self-government work successfully. The calm and orderly way in which they have conducted themselves during this revolution may be cited as a convincing proof that they are quite ready for a republic. No less encouraging to the republicans is the success of the various provincial assemblies, whose members were chosen with rare judgment by the people.

With able, intelligent and unselfish leaders in charge of government affairs and with the training and characteristics of the people already mentioned, there is every reason to believe that a republic is feasible and workable in China, and that order will be quickly brought out of the present chaos. Substantial and pressing reforms will be instituted and carried out along educational, industrial and other important lines, under a strong, responsible and responsive government. With a republic once securely established, and with the country properly started on her reform movement, it will not be long before China becomes a modern and progressive nation, and takes her rightful place at the world's council-table. When that peace-loving people are at last able to stand upon their own feet, a long step will have been taken towards realizing the long-dreamed-of and much-talked-about universal peace. The so-called balance of power of the world will then be established. No longer will there be any fear of international conflicts arising out of China's weakness, as has been the case in the past. China will continue to adhere to her traditional policy of peace and honesty and lend a strong hand to the world's peace movement—a movement which is supported by all interested in the advancement of humankind.